UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

Applied Psycholinguistics

2122-2-F5105P011

Learning area

Applied experimental psychological sciences

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding

- identification of the common structures underlying language in the different modalities (spoken languages, visual sign languages and tactile sign languages)
- analysis of linguistic ambiguity (phonological, lexical, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic) from the point of view of (i) the architecture of language and (ii) the mechanisms underlying language processing
- analysis of the mechanisms of parsing of words and sentences and principles of language processing from the point of view of (i) theoretical implications (for models of language processing); (ii) practical applications (use of language in real communicative situations; evaluation of different targets, scopes and means of communication of the message)
- analysis of the experimental methodologies and paradigms used in the investigation of the mechanisms involved in language processing
- analysis of the experimental questions that inform the current debates in psycholinguistics, also considering different linguistic backgrounds and linguistic modalities (bilingualism, sign languages)

Applying knowledge and understanding

- reasoning about the form (or forms) of language to express linguistic content for different situational needs,

modalities or scopes
- evaluating experimental paradigms and tools for the investigation of language use and language comprehension, also in consideration of the population (e.g., monolinguals vs. bilinguals, hearing vs. deaf), linguistic modality (e.g., spoken vs. signed languages) and linguistic features of the language under investigation
- reasoning about implicit content triggered by linguistic items and analysis of non-literal interpretations
- interpreting behavioral measures (reading/reaction times measures, implicit measures of processing such as eye-tracking measures) in the research on spoken and sign languages
- analyzing scientific reports critically
- implementing testable hypothesis of research on language

Contents

The course provides an overview of the mechanisms underlying the processing of language focusing on (i) the different models of language processing in an up-to-date perspective; (ii) the different experimental techniques and paradigms used in psycholinguistic research; (iii) the current experimental research questions and the current debates about the use and processing of language in monolingual (and bilingual) adults, including bimodal bilinguals (individuals using a spoken and a sign language)

Detailed program

- Basic concepts in linguistics and basic tools to represent linguistic structures and interpretations
- On-line processing of spoken and sign languages
- Effects of language deprivation in early childhood
- Prediction and anticipation in language
- Experimental methods and techniques used in psycholinguistics to investigate different linguistic phenomena
- Lexical access and representation in monolingual and bilingual adults, including signers and bimodal bilinguals
- Discussion of possible cognitive advantages of bilingualism, including bimodal bilingualism
- Language emergence from gestural systems

Prerequisites

A background in linguistics and basic knowledge of syntax and semantics is not required; the background information necessary to follow the course will be provided during the course. Knowledge of sign language structures is not required, since the background information will be given during the discussion of the experiments concerning signs.

Teaching methods

Lectures; individual or collective practice exercises; individual or group discussions of experimental works in scientific papers.

Lessons will be held in presence, unless further COVID-19 related restrictions are imposed.

Assessment methods

The exam will verify the level of mastery of the course contents with special attention to:

- knowledge of methods and research designs in psycholinguistics, as well as main results and current debates
- ability to analyze and review a scientific paper in the field of psycholinguistics;
- ability to apply theoretical notions to real-world situations of language use

The exam is **written** and comprises:

- open questions in order to assess the acquisition of theoretical notions and the ability to extend this competence to cases of real communicative situations;

- a series of exercises in which the student is required to extend the knowledge acquired to real examples of use of language.

Upon student's request, the exam can be completed with an oral examination, on all the course topics.

For students attending lessons on a regular basis, an ad-hoc examination and evaluation will be offered, as detailed below:

- Active participation in class discussion (during live streaming classes or fulfillment of course assignments during the course): (10% of the final grade)

- Mid-term assignment: Presentation during the class consisting in the critical analysis of a scientific paper (20% of the final grade)

- End-term examination on course content, as detailed above (70% of the final grade)

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Sedivy, J. (2019). *Language in mind: An introduction to psycholinguistics*. Oxford University Press, 2nd edition (the first 2014 edition is also fine) - only selected chapters (a digital version of the book is available through the library system).

Additional reading material (including scientific papers) will be specified during the course.